

Supporting Pupils Through the Emotional Challenges of Year 6 SATs: A stormbreak Guide for Teachers

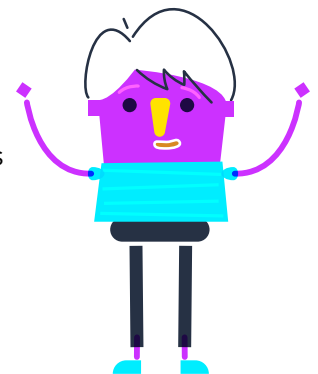


As Year 6 teachers, you're on the front line of preparing children for SATs — academically, yes, but emotionally too. While the focus on attainment is ever-present, it's equally important to acknowledge that for many 10 and 11 year olds, SATs can be a deeply emotional experience.

This period may be their first encounter with high-stakes testing, and without the emotional tools adults take for granted, many children can feel overwhelmed. Recognising the signs of stress and anxiety — and knowing how to respond — is essential in creating a supportive, balanced environment.

As always, Stormbreak is here to support you and your pupils. Several stormbreak activities can help children manage the emotional pressures that SATs often bring. One particularly relevant example is 'Exam Anchor' — a thoughtfully created stormbreak designed specifically with SATs in mind. You can find the video using this link, or by searching for our young Stormbreak coach, Bria, using the filter function.

Below, you'll find additional tips and suggested stormbreak videos to help during this period. While using the videos is a great option, delivering the stormbreaks yourself can be just as — if not more — impactful in supporting children's emotional wellbeing during this challenging time.



1. Pressure from Above Can Trickle Down

It's no secret that schools are under pressure to meet performance standards, and unfortunately, this can filter down to pupils. Children are acutely sensitive to adult stress, and even unspoken tensions around results can make them feel they're carrying the reputation of the school on their shoulders. As teachers, being mindful of how we talk about results and accountability can help reduce this pressure.

What helps: Use neutral, supportive language around assessments. Emphasise personal progress rather than fixed outcomes.

2. Fear of Failure and Impostor Feelings

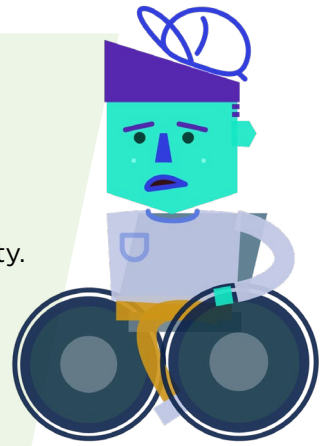
Many pupils begin to doubt their abilities in the lead up to SATs. They might compare themselves to peers, worry about letting down adults they admire, or internalise the idea that their results define their value. These feelings can be especially strong in children who are quiet, perfectionistic, or already lack academic confidence.

What helps: Share stories of learning from mistakes. Celebrate effort, creativity, and growth — not just correct answers.

3. Disrupted Routines = Emotional Ripple Effects

The intense focus on SATs can alter classroom dynamics and the atmosphere can become test focused. While this is often unavoidable, it can feel destabilising for pupils — especially those who find comfort in routine or are already managing anxiety.

What helps: Keep parts of the day “normal.” Protect time for storytelling, art, games, and open discussion where children can relax and be themselves.



4. Signs of Hidden Stress

Not all pupils will voice their worries openly. For some, anxiety can show up in indirect ways: irritability, withdrawal, tummy aches, or poor concentration. These behaviours are not always easy to decode, but they may be signals that a child is struggling with the pressure.

What helps: Check in informally. Use short one-to-one chats, exit tickets, or class wellbeing boards to give pupils space to express how they feel.

5. Language and Labelling Matter

SATs results are often framed in ways that unintentionally create fixed mindsets — “low ability,” “greater depth,” “working towards.” While these terms are used for tracking and reporting, pupils can internalise them as personal labels.

What helps: Use language that highlights learning as a journey. Reinforce that these tests measure only a narrow part of who they are.

6. Modelling Calm and Confidence

Children take emotional cues from the adults around them. If we show confidence in their ability to succeed *and* cope with setbacks, they’re more likely to believe it too. Creating an emotionally safe space doesn’t mean ignoring academic expectations — it means helping children rise to them with support, not fear.

What helps: Celebrate small wins. Laugh with your class. Let them see you as a person who believes in them — regardless of the data.



Suggested stormbreaks



Resilience

Life in Balance >

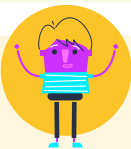
When delivering this yourself it will allow you to talk about and link the physical feeling of being 'wobbly' with the emotional equivalent of feeling 'wobbly' and unbalanced.

Glitter Jar >

This stormbreak will allow the children to remind themselves that they may experience a range of emotions during this challenging time but if they find moments to let the 'glitter' settle they will be able to see more clearly again.

Pebble Meditation >

This stormbreak will allow the children to find a moment of calm so that they can return to SATs resilient and ready for the next challenge.



Self-care

Roll With it >

If you deliver this yourself, talk about how we may experience a range of emotions during this period but if we feel 'stuck' in a particularly uncomfortable feeling we can do something about it.



Relationships

Copy Cats >

If you deliver this yourself, talk about paying attention and noticing how others are feeling, allowing the children to better support one another.



Self-worth

Sunrise >

If you deliver this yourself, this will allow you to fill the children with positive affirmations building up their self-worth before or after sitting one of their SATs.

Compliment Collection >

When delivering this yourself it will allow children to hear compliments from one another, not only building up their self-worth, but also strengthening connections during this difficult period.



Hope & optimism

Mood Shift >

Experiencing a range of emotions during the SATs period is perfectly normal and this stormbreak will help you explore that idea allowing you to discuss what the children can do if they feel stuck in an emotion and end up lacking in hope and optimism.

Final Thoughts

SATs are important — but they are not everything. For Year 6 pupils, this moment is as much about developing resilience, self-belief, and emotional maturity as it is about reading comprehension or fractions.

As teachers, your role in shaping how children experience this time is powerful. With empathy, consistency, and encouragement, you can help them walk into their SATs feeling prepared — not just to pass a test, but to face challenges with confidence.

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